

10 BIG IDEAS



*that can
increase the
challenge level for
high-achieving
students
in*



**Language
Arts**

CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Rationale

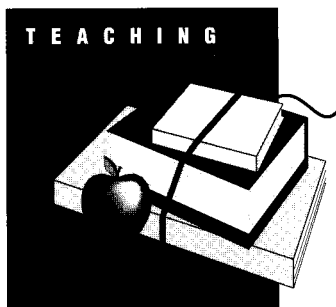
Thousands of gifted and talented young people and adolescents sit in classrooms across the state. Decades of research demonstrate that learning needs of gifted and talented students go beyond what is traditionally provided in regular classrooms. The nature of their abilities and talents, demonstrated or latent, require differentiated learning opportunities to help them realize their potential.

Connecticut educators genuinely care about *all* of their students and seek to meet the incredibly diverse learning needs of the students they face daily. Too often, however, classroom teachers do not have the tools, information, or support they need to meet these needs—particularly those of their gifted and talented students.

Connecticut educators genuinely care about all their students and want to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse learners in their classrooms.

Still, the responsibility for increasing the challenge level for gifted and talented students and for providing them with expanded learning opportunities rests largely with the classroom teacher.

This series of brochures is designed to provide classroom teachers, as well as teachers of the gifted and talented, with a number of practical ideas and resources for refining and expanding learning options to better meet these needs. The strategies were selected because they are inexpensive and readily adaptable by teachers. Although the 10 strategies listed here do not replace the powerful services of a full-time enrichment specialist and program for the gifted, we hope that all teachers will use the strategies systematically and that, over time, their use will lead to an increasing array of high-level learning options for gifted and talented students in Connecticut.



Great Links

Just for Kids

(<http://www.just-for-kids.com/gifted.html>)

This website focuses on the unique learning needs of precocious readers. Specifically, the author provides browsers with an extensive list of books that are psychologically and developmentally appropriate for young (7-10), but advanced readers.

Top Humanities Websites

(<http://edsitement.neh.fed.us/websites-lit.html>)

EDSITEment contains many sites in the areas of literature, history, foreign languages and art history. The sites are selected using a review process developed by the National Endowment for the Humanities, so these sites are truly among the top sites for humanities learning and research. Under the broad category of literature, over 25 different links are available on very diverse literary topics including, for example: American Verse Project (electronic archive of American poetry prior to 1920); Presidential Speeches (documentary resources dedicated to American presidents); and Victorian Women Writers Project (texts and contexts for students of 19th century British literature).

Teaching Ideas (<http://www.ncte.org/teach/lit.shtml>)

This site contains practical ideas for teaching literature, including plans, introductory activities, learning activities and rubrics. Readers can browse by grade level (elementary, middle, secondary, college).

International Reading Association (IRA)

(<http://www.reading.org>)

This site contains a variety of documents. The first is the IRA's set of Children's Reading Rights and the second contains the national standards for English Language Arts. A third site contains 3 lists of "best books": Teachers' Choices, 1999 (an annotated list of over 25 books); Young Adults' Choices, 1999 (over 30 books with annotations); Children's Choices, 1999 (over 70 books, with annotations, categorized for beginning, young, intermediate and advanced readers.)

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement

(CIERA) (<http://www.ciera.org/ciera>)

On this site is free information about early literacy acquisition and effective strategies for teaching reading. Ciera publications provide insight into the current thinking of the nation's leading researchers in the field of literacy. The site also contains links to a broad range of literacy related sites.

- 1** Diagnose students' reading levels throughout the year. Provide students with reading selections and resources that are based on the present needs and demands of the reader, not on chronological age or grade level. Software packages, such as *Booklinks* published by Touchstone Applied Science Associates (TASA), categorize thousands of titles by DRP level, genre and topic (www.tasaliteracy.com).
- 2** Develop small, flexible reading/writing groups based on a variety of factors including, for example, interest, questions, reading/writing skill level or prior knowledge. Monitor students' progress regularly and regroup accordingly. Document student progress with an array of assessment strategies, including reading and writing portfolios. (An Act Concerning Early Reading Success, C.G.S. Sec. 10-265f).
- 3** Request that school and town librarians collaborate on collection development (C.G.S. Sec. 10-265f). Collections must include a variety of books at all reading levels, represent a spectrum of genres, and appeal to students' developmental interests. For gifted readers, who may be reading two or three grade levels beyond their chronological age, it becomes a challenge to find materials that are psychologically and developmentally appropriate. Explore the following categories of books for young, precocious readers: timeless fantasy, classic stories, modern fiction, epic fantasy and nonfiction materials. See the following website for a recommended list of titles for young, gifted readers, www.just-for-kids.com/gifted.html.
- 4** Provide precocious readers and writers with time for free reading and writing. Time can be provided in class or in after-school enrichment activities such as, for example, a Writer's Guild, a Literary Magazine Club, a Poet's Society or a Newspaper Club. Encourage summer reading by providing parents and students with a list of suggested titles by topic, genre and DRP level.

- 5 Require students to read critically. Open-ended questions and activities compel students to analyze reading materials and substantiate their answers. The Great Books Foundation offers a supplementary reading program, Junior Great Books, and provides training for parents and teachers in the process of “shared inquiry.” Shared inquiry is a method of learning that requires readers to analyze reading materials, critically think about a problem, evaluate evidence and reconcile diverse opinions about a reading selection. (The Great Books Foundation: (312) 332-5870, (www.greatbooks.org).
- 6 Provide all students, including those who are advanced readers and writers, with an opportunity to explore a self-selected topic in depth. Precocious readers may want to pursue an author study about their favorite writer or illustrator. *Book Links*, a magazine designed for teachers, librarians and media specialists, publishes author studies, essays linking books on a similar theme, bibliographies, retrospective reviews and other features for those who educate young people. (<http://www.ala.org/BookLinks>) Several websites feature renowned authors and illustrators and invite browsers to explore books, as well as their authors. Some provide students with opportunities to communicate directly with selected authors. Author Studies for Primary Grades (1-3), (<http://edservices.aea7.k12.ia.us/edtech/teacherpages/djjwolfo/>); Women in Literature Database (<http://www.kutztown.edu/faculty/reagan/lit.html>); Jan Brett's Children's Literature Site (<http://www.janbrett.com/>).
- 7 Insist that students master the art of persuasive writing and speaking. Offer a debate club and encourage all students, especially advanced readers, to participate and learn the art of forensic discourse (www.forensiconline.com).
- 8 Teach students how to create a variety of real-world products, such as stories, newspapers and newspaper articles, poems, magazine articles, advertisements, pamphlets, movie and literary reviews, documentaries, and websites. Teach them how to use the latest software to create their products.
- 9 Encourage students to participate in selected contests and competitions. See *All the Best Contests for Kids* (5th edition) by Joan Bergstrom and Craig Bergstrom and *The Ultimate Guide to Student Contests, Grades 7-12* by Scott Pendleton. Contests and competitions are listed and described in both books by grade levels and in the following categories: journalism, essay writing, playwriting and poetry.
- 10 Promote the use of bibliotherapy with highly able readers and writers. Bibliotherapy is the use of children's books to help young people understand and resolve personal issues. It is a particularly effective technique with avid readers because they are capable of seeing the metaphoric implications of the material, not only for the characters in the plot, but also for themselves. See the following websites for information about bibliotherapy: *Molding the Minds of the Young: The History of Bibliotherapy*, (<http://borg.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter95/Myracle.html>); *Guiding the Gifted Reader* (http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/guiding_giftedreader.html#credits); *Guiding the Gifted Reader* (<http://ericec.org/digests/e481.htm>); and *Helping Children With Books* (<http://www.ci.eugene.or.us/Library/staffref/therapy.htm>).

